

TITLE	Taxi and Private Hire (Dual) Three Year Driver Licences
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Licensing and Appeals Committee on 18 March 2014
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Paul Anstey Joint Service Delivery Manager for Environmental Health & Licensing

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Three year driver licences will relieve a great deal of the administrative burden from both drivers and officers.

RECOMMENDATION

To have Members agree to the principal of three year licences and to permit officers to consult with the taxi and private hire drivers regarding its implementation.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council currently issues driver licences for one year however the law allows for the issue of three year licences. This report outlines the benefits of issuing three year licences and asks Members to authorise officers to consult fully with the trade and report back its findings at the Licensing and Appeals Committee meeting scheduled for the 16 June 2014.

Background

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that a council issue hackney carriage and private hire driver licences upon receipt of a valid application, for a period not greater than three years or such lesser period as they may specify.

Currently, the Council issues a dual annual licence, an annual licence for private hire and an annual private hire school and community services driver licence (PHSC).

It is proposed that the Council consider issuing the dual and the private hire driver licences every three years as opposed to annually.

Three year licences are issued by many council's nationally including, locally, Reading, South Bucks and Bracknell. Windsor and Maidenhead are currently considering three year licences. By changing to three year licences there would be no impact upon the Disclosure and Barring Service checks as these are currently checked every three years from the date of first being licensed and are not necessarily completely in line with renewal dates.

Medicals would still be carried out in accordance with the Group 2 Standards already agreed by this committee. That is, on first being licensed, every five years between the ages of 45 and 65 and once per year over 65 years of age.

This proposal would save on officer administration time over the second and third years and would not increase work loads over the first year period as licences would be issued as normal. It would also benefit drivers by not having to go through the process of applying for annual licences.

At this time, due to the differences between West Berkshire and Wokingham Councils in PHSC licences, it is not intended to change this process; however officers will consider the impact of changes to three year licences for PHSC during the forthcoming financial year.

It is important that this proposal is put to the trade through a consultation exercise which officers would like to commence immediately and which would terminate on the 18th May 2014, thus allowing time for the writing of a report, complete with consultation responses, for presentation back to this committee on the 16th June 2014.

Potential savings to the Council will be through administration time only. The issuing of three year licences will also bring consistency to the West Berkshire and Wokingham Shared Service practices. It is essential to the efficiency of the shared service to apply the same administrative principles to both the Newbury and Shute End offices thus allowing for the interchanging of staff when necessary.

West Berkshire Council introduced three year driver licences in 2004 and have benefited from the freeing up of taxi administration time on issuing licences, thus being able to bring resources to other areas of taxi licensing.

Analysis of Issues

- To consider the introduction of three year taxi and private hire driver (Dual) licences in the Borough of Wokingham thus bringing consistency to the Shared Service taxi administrative function.
- The freeing up of officer time thus allowing for resources to be deployed elsewhere in taxi licensing.
- Benefits to the trade through a reduced administrative burden in applying for three year licences.

Risks

It is not anticipated that by having a three year licence there is any increase in risk to the council or the public.

- Drivers will continue to be expected to meet all requirements in terms of their health and criminal record checks.
- Records will be maintained and details checked in relation to CRB's and driver medical requirements.

All these matters will be regularly reviewed by the Licensing Team and should there be any concern the policy will be reviewed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Not Applicable		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not Applicable at this time		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not Applicable at this time.		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Although a saving in administrative time will have a financial bearing upon service delivery the time saved will allow for other licensing work to be carried out.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services and priorities?)

This proposal will bring both Wokingham Borough and West Berkshire District in to line in its legal responsibility to issue driver licences.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Not Applicable

List of Background Papers

None

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Date 3 March 2014

Version No.
